



THOMAS



MC PHERSON



WASHINGTON



HANCOCK



GREENE

## AS AN ART CENTER

Washington Destined to Become the Mecca of Painters.

## ITS MANY ADVANTAGES

AN INTERESTING CITY WITH PICTURESQUE SURROUNDINGS.

The Steady Progress Shown by the Local Artists—Some Who Have Gained Fame.

BY LILLA MICHILIN.

In many respects Washington is peculiarly suited for an art center. Primarily, there is in the United States no city which, in itself, is so intensely artistic, whose entire environment tends so strongly toward the creation of art; and, secondarily, the personnel of the population, which is cosmopolitan to the farthest degree, gives it a breadth and universality which none other can attain. If we believe that the art of Greece owed much to the physical formation and situation of the country, and that the blue sea and sky, together with the glowing Venetian sunset, influenced the development of the greatest school of colorists the world has ever known, why, then, should we think that a city teeming with natural beauty is not a more inspiring place for artists to live than a smoke-begrimed, tenement-plagued, offensive one? Washington is in this respect an ideal abiding place for artists. Its broad streets, varied architecture, splendid foliage, many parks and imposing public buildings, combine in making an endless series of delightful pictures. There are many cities of which certain portions are beautiful and attractive, but none which, like Washington, is beautiful from end to end.

Vandyke has said that unless you have studied art you really know nothing about

nature, but it requires neither the skilled eye of the artist nor the gift of a magician to make the beauties of this city plainly manifest.

Beautiful Views Everywhere. Take, for instance, the view across the mall on a bright morning, either from 17th and F street, looking southeast, or from 14th near Pennsylvania avenue looking southwest, taking in either the rear en-

rich in paintable possibilities. And so it runs, each section having its special charm. There is art in the air, and spring and fall no man can escape it.

The surrounding country, too, is vastly picturesque and paintable, and as yet unspoiled by the civilizing processes of man.

Thirty minutes' ride in any direction from the heart of the city will land an artist in the most unadorned country, in which every variety of scenery can be found

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ors and gardeners; the other by the people that inhabit it. One often is confused with the other, but they seldom are identical. Washington's second city is indeed distinctly individual and somewhat the opposite of its first. It is made up of a small laboring class, a large governmental contingency, an ever-shifting army and navy circle, a diplomatic corps, congressional representatives of the several states, with their visiting constituents, departmental officers and a leisurely wealthy set. It is thoroughly catholic, unconventional and cosmopolitan. There is no localism, and therefore little "city pride." But on the other hand, it is splendidly conducive to the spreading of fame. If you impress the Washington public today, you will be known ten years from now by some one in not only every state in the Union, but every country of the world.

That it is not easy to impress the Washington public is true, as is also the fact that Americans have not been discriminating patrons of art. A prominent collector explained this the other day by saying that the reason Americans do not appreciate art is because, heretofore, they have not had the time to learn it. Ruskin has defined art as a language, and ethnologists testify that it is native to every race of man, but in its highest development, in the so-called "fine arts," it is, to a great measure, a matter of education, a matter chiefly of seeing and feeling. One who has been surrounded by such paintings as those of Rembrandt, Titian, Reynolds and Corot is not likely to prefer the prints or color photographs, and it is these people who have known the best that go largely toward making up the representative society of Washington. This is not a business city, but it is the pleasantest place in the world in which to live and do nothing. It is the leisure class which is coming more and more to Washington to find homes; people who can have what they want and want the best. The bustle and hurry of a great city is as removed from Washington as though it were five days, rather than hours, from breathless Gotham. There is a provincial air of plenty of time, and in the development of it, inspiring to the worker, is perfectly in harmony with the seers of visions and dreamers of dreams.

But there is another side to Washington—a side which is by no means all play or ease—which has had a potent bearing upon its intellectual and in the development of its art. There is, permanently residing here, a coterie of scholars and scientists connected with the Smithsonian Institution, National Museum and Geological Survey who are not only liberal patrons of art, but have themselves become skillful in its several branches.

The National Museum offers every opportunity for the study of the origin and development of art among the nations, or, rather, races, and the Congressional library places within the reach of all a collection of writings on art and artists second to none in this country, in connection with which must be reckoned the treasures and privileges of the print department, which are likewise free to all.

There is also an economic reason for Washington being an art center. Living here is not only pleasant, but comparatively reasonable. To live comfortably and on a moderate scale, it is necessary to alienate oneself from congenial surroundings to accomplish the feat. But be all this as it may, Washington has in the past given to the world more than one capable artist. From here have gone to the great galleries, having first met with recognition at home, have among the great struggling masses won laurels for themselves and their native city.

## Artists Who Have Won Fame.

Perhaps it is scarcely fair to number among these James McNeill Whistler, as it was not until after he had left West Point that he came to live in Washington, but it was while he was here, a period of several years, during which time he was connected with the coast survey, that he, metaphorically, found himself, and discovered his real vocation. Eastman Johnson began his art career in Washington. Healy for years had a studio in this city and considered it his home when in America. Alexander Harrison did his first important work while in the service of the geological survey, and within recent years a goodly company of young artists, all Washingtonians born and bred, have gone out to meet with extraordinary success. There is, for instance, Geo. Gibbs, the author and illustrator, and his colleague, Mills Thompson, who is now the art editor of the Philadelphia Saturday Evening Post, as well as the designer of one of the most artistic covers in which the Scribner's Magazine has yet appeared. Lorenzo Hatch, who is one of the principal engravers in the employ of the American Bank Note Company, learned his profession as an apprentice at the bureau of engraving and printing, and, with Mr. Gibbs and Mr. Thompson, is an ex-student of the Washington Art League. There is Will Coffin, the portrait painter; Rudolph Evans, the sculptor, and George Senseney, the etcher, all of whom studied almost solely in Washington. Then there is Everett Warner, the winner of the first Corcoran prize and the Water Color Club's last annual exhibition. A High School boy who with little other than self training has fought his way in seven short years to the front ranks of American water colorists; and there is Juliet Thompson, whose brilliant, vigorous portrait work in pastels has for many years found a prominent place in the foremost American annuals.

## Not Yet a Good Market.

But, why, you say, if Washington is so inspiring and pleasant a place to live do artists leave it? Because, Washington, with all its natural charms and uplifting environments, does not, to put it rudely, offer

the erection of a building (included in the park commissioners' plan) in which exhibitions, great and small, could be held; in which, in fact, might be established an American salon.

Another significantly progressive step taken last year was the incorporation of an "Arts and Crafts Club," the purpose of which was to promote civic pride, to encourage the arts and crafts, and to bring into closer and more familiar relations the artists and laymen of Washington. As soon as \$10,000 is subscribed a club house is to be erected on the site of the old Corcoran school, a small hall in which transient exhibitions can be held during the season.

The exhibition of the park commissioners' plan last April also marked the beginning of a new era of artistic thought and feeling. The splendid possibilities which they laid before the people of the United States for the future of their capital city have been too clearly demonstrated to need further explanation, and are too impressively desirable to need more practical intelligent and cultured community, but it may be fittingly pointed out that the fulfillment of these plans would greatly heighten Washington's reasonable claims to the title of art center. So much for the future. At the present time Washington has no occasion either to hang on elusive promises, or to chafe at the slow pace of the work of the world of art.

## Art Societies.

Away back in 1857 an organization called "The Washington Art Society" was founded here under the leadership of Horatio Stone, the sculptor, and S. F. B. Morse, a charter member of the New York Academy of Design, as well as the inventor of the telegraph. Its purpose was the establishment of a national organization similar to the Paris Salon, and a considerable interest and enthusiasm was awakened among government officials and the general public. Lord Napier, then a member of the diplomatic corps, made an address in its behalf. In 1859 an exhibition was held in the old Corcoran building and all was progressing finely when the war broke out. It was in these early days that Emanuel Leuze painted his "Westward Ho," which hangs in the Capitol, and that Brumidi did his best work. Following in the footsteps of this oldest organization comes the present "Society of Washington Artists," which for the past twelve years has held annual exhibitions, raising the standard steadily until the last was found not only to compare favorably with important out-of-town annuals, but to be thoroughly representative of the best American contemporary art. The Washington Water Color Club is a sister organization which likewise holds notable annual exhibitions, the seventh of which is now in progress in the Hemicycle of the Corcoran Gallery. Besides these there is a local architects' club, and both the American Institute of Architects and the Society of American Plate Engravers have their headquarters in this city. The Library of Congress is, in a way, a great gallery of modern art, as well as a marvellously beautiful piece of architecture, and the Corcoran Gallery, with its excellent collection of nineteenth century paintings and antique casts, is also more than fittingly housed. There is, moreover, Mr. Thomas E. Waggaman's private gallery, rich in examples of the Dutch school of painting, and in rare old porcelains, bronzes, etc., from China and Japan, which is opened to the public during a portion of each year, as well as various other valuable private collections. There is a well-equipped school of art connected with the Corcoran Gallery under the direction of an able corps of instructors; a school of design and applied



Thomas Circle, Looking North.

the artist a market for his work. The true artist does care, more for the approval of his own judgment and the plaudits of his fellow-workers, than for the sale of a picture; but no one can live on these alone, and, after all, the only reliable test of appreciation must be in material valuation.